

Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras Emergency Response

U.S.-Mexico Border 2012 Program



Key Guiding Principle:
Strengthen capacity of local community residents and other stakeholders to manage environmental and environmentally-related public health issues.

Four-State Regional Workgroup (Texas - Tamaulipas - Nuevo Leon - Coahuila)



Real Life Benefits of Emergency Response Training

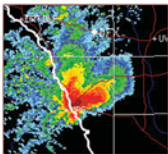


Through the Sister City Agreements, EPA has been able to establish dialogue between first responders on both sides of the border, where previously there was no avenue. Even the simple exchange of phone numbers and

information between first responders on both sides of the borders has assisted greatly with emergency response. We have learned that the Sister Cities have found this program quite successful in building these kinds of communication bridges.

The cities of Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras have long recognized the need to cooperate with each other in times of local disasters. In September of 2006, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lead a series of educational training events including a hazardous materials simulation. EPA provided training in the Incident Command System (ICS), Hazardous Materials, and Weapons of Mass Destruction / Counter Terrorism response in addition to the simulated chemical spill which tested emergency responders from both sides of the border.

This training was put to the test as a result of events that took place on April 24, 2007.



A tornado struck the sister cities of Eagle Pass, Texas and Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico on April 24, 2007 with little warning from emergency broadcasting services. The tornado passed through the south side of town destroying two

schools, twenty homes, and killing seven people. Emergency responders worked tirelessly assisting victims and assessing damage. Responders also assisted with the tornado that hit a few miles south of Eagle Pass in an unincorporated area of Maverick County.



A reported 350 residents crowded Eagle Pass emergency shelters. Across the border in Piedras Negras, at least three people were killed and at least 40 were injured in a violent storm. More than 200 emergency responders, including National Guard units attached to

Natural or man-made disasters do not stop at the border.



the Border Patrol, were assisting local agencies in their door-to-door search and rescue efforts.

Multinational emergency simulations and trainings, such as the one conducted in September 2006 with the EPA, facilitated quick and efficient communications among local first responders between the sister cities during the April 2007 tornado response. Fire chief Roy De La Cruz from Eagle Pass noted that the 2006 training in ICS, along with a revised communications plan, allowed for a more effective and coordinated response effort. Having up-to-date response plans and trained responders is vital in saving lives and minimizing damage to property and the environment. ■

One of EPA's Border 2012 Program goals is to adopt emergency contingency plans for all 15 pairs of sister cities along the U.S.-Mexico border region. Since 1998, a local contingency plan has been in place between the sister cities of Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras. This sister city plan allows for communities to conduct joint training, drills and emergency communication planning. In addition, the plans call for police, fire, paramedics and other emergency responders from both sides of the border to respond quickly to large fires, dangerous chemical spills and other emergencies.

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Sister City agreements enable first responders on both sides of the Border to establish communication in times of disaster.

This is a hallmark of the Sister City agreements.